

JGE331H1S

RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL THEORY

COURSE SYLLABUS, WINTER TERM 2018

**Department of Geography and Planning
School of the Environment
University of Toronto**

**Instructor:
Scott Prudham, Professor
Department of Geography and Planning
School of the Environment**

**Course Meetings:
Wednesdays, 14:00-16:00
Sidney Smith Hall Room 2110**

Overview

Contemporary anthropogenic environmental changes constitute some of the most pressing challenges we face. There is widespread agreement on this (well, outside the Trump White House perhaps). And yet, if “we are all environmentalists now” (as some would have it...are you?), what sort of environmentalism do we wish to practice and why? What are the predominant ideas that influence the way we think about and respond to environmental problems and where did they come from? And how do the answers to these questions turn on the way we understand the relationship between nature (human and non) on the one hand and society on the other?

This course is intended to help develop the critical capacity to consider, understand, and act in relation to contemporary environmental problems and policy approaches based in part on engaging with the provenance of some of the most important ideas that animate (sometimes implicitly) contemporary environmentalism and environmental policy discussions. We will also attempt whenever possible to develop both the explicit and implicit geographical aspects of these ideas and prescriptions.

Resource and Environmental Theory: Big Ideas

One of the founding principles of the course is that there are conceptual underpinnings to the ways we both understand and respond to environmental problems. This includes, importantly, the conceptual foundations for both problem framing and problem resolution. Often the former begets the latter. Yet, too often, these conceptual foundations and their provenance are taken for granted or under-examined as opposed to being named and critically interrogated. Consider, for instance, where the idea of parks and protected areas came from? Not a simple question and one whose answers may well surprise you. We aim to discuss the complex “lives” of some of these conceptual paradigms, to think about their geographical implications (again, explicit and otherwise) and to develop critical appraisals of them.

Where possible, we will be reading primary and canonical texts. All of the texts are scholarly. That means no textbooks, no summaries, and no derivative policy papers. Some of the readings will seem a bit anachronistic in style and content. Many will make for challenging reading. But I believe it will be to your benefit to have gone to the source in most instances rather than taking someone else’s word for it.

Unfortunately, we only have eleven weeks to work with (not counting the first course meeting) so we must make choices. Inevitably, there are some important ideas and paradigms we will not be dealing with. Hopefully you will be able to take what you learn in this course and apply it to other paradigms, theories, and assumptions that circulate in environmentalism, environmental policy, and nature/society debates, if not more widely.

Course Objectives

This course has several objectives:

1. To recognize and understand some of the core ideas and theories, principles and assumptions (often implicit) underpinning dominant paradigms used to understand and respond to contemporary environmental changes and related policy debates.
2. To develop a perspective on environmental issues and problems that looks not only to their biophysical or “natural” dynamics, but also their social dimensions, and how the social and biophysical dimensions are integrated or co-determined.
3. To develop critical thinking and reading skills, with emphasis on the close interrogation of assigned readings. Particular emphasis will be placed on developing a capacity to read scholarly writing on relevant issues and to identify the conceptual architecture of those writings.
4. To identify and consider geographical aspects of the ideas and paradigms we discuss.
5. To develop some facility to write about course related themes in an independent, critical, and informed way.
6. To become better citizens of this planet.

Course Instructor

Scott Prudham, Professor, Department of Geography and Planning, School of the Environment, Room 5007, Sidney Smith Hall.

- home page: <http://scottprudham.ca>
- email: scott.prudham@utoronto.ca If you email me, please make an effort to ask questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no”. If you have a question that requires more detail and dialogue, then please speak to me immediately after class, drop in during my weekly office hours, or make an appointment to meet with me in my office at another time.
- office hours: Thursdays 14:30-16:30 (or by prior arrangement), Sidney Smith Hall #5007

Teaching Assistants:

- Stephanie Stanov, office hours TBA
- Isabel Urrutia, office hours TBA

Course Meetings:

Wednesdays 14:00-16:00, SS 2110

Course Reading Material:

All of the course readings, unless otherwise noted, are available electronically through the U of T Library (see the schedule of topics and readings in a separate document posted to the course space in Blackboard).

U of T Portal and Blackboard.

The topic and reading schedule is posted in the Blackboard site in a separate document. You should download it and keep it handy. Assignments will also be posted on Blackboard. Completed assignments should be submitted via the Blackboard course site.

Check the course site on Blackboard through the U of T Portal frequently. This syllabus is always there for your reference. Additional information and announcements, guides to assignments etc. will also be placed there. Lecture slides will be posted by the end of the day prior to each lecture (i.e., on Tuesday evenings at the latest). You may wish to make use of the slides to assist you in making notes. In-progress grades are also available via the course site in Blackboard.

Please note that to communicate properly and to use the course site in Blackboard properly, you must use your official U of T email address to logon on to the Portal.

Course Format

We meet once per week for two hours. Most of these meetings will consist of a mix of lecturing and interactive dialogue, along with review of relevant multi-media resources. I do not want this class to consist of me talking at you for two hours per week. I don't think that maximizes our learning, and it presumes that I have all the answers — I assure you that I do not! It will be much better to run the lecture sessions as a dialog involving critical questions and discussion based on the readings and relevant case material. I therefore require that you complete the readings *prior* to class meetings each week, and that you come to class with questions based on them and prepared to address the questions of others in the class. You are expected to be familiar with the readings *and* the discussions we conduct in lecture. Please do ask questions. I like it.

Assignments and Grading:

This class does not require a great deal of written or research work on your part. That is because I want you to focus on reading carefully and thinking critically and actively about what you read. I do, however, have fairly high expectations of the quality of written work that you do submit. Generally speaking, if you don't write very well, then you are unlikely to do very well in this class. As a matter of policy I do not read between the lines when it comes to engaging with your writing, and I instruct the TAs not to do so. We do not evaluate the clarity and quality of your prose by taking into account our own knowledge of the subject (though we will take issue on substance on that basis when appropriate) and then guessing what you are trying to say. Put differently, if we feel that you are being unclear or vague or imprecise in your phrasing, we will not infer your meaning. So you should write with an "imagined" non-specialist audience in mind, not us!

If you are concerned about your writing, I highly recommend that you make an appointment at one of the Writing Centres (see below) on campus as soon as possible to consult with people there on how to improve your writing in this course and in your other courses.

In addition, one of the core emphases in this class, aside from learning the substantive content, is to help you to develop the capacity to read more critically. It is a major focus and one of the reasons that I have not assigned a research paper in the course. *It is very important to complete the assigned readings each week and to come to lecture on a regular*

basis. I am sure it is important to go to class in most of your courses, and I am sure it is important in those courses to do the assigned readings. Nevertheless, I feel obligated to tell you that I believe doing both of those things to be vital to success in this course. The lectures do build on the assigned readings, but the assigned readings in this course may be difficult for many of you and you will not do very well if you do not know what aspects of them I want to emphasize. In some cases I have assigned readings that express views quite different from what you will get in lecture, so you need to read the assigned readings before class meetings and then come to lecture to engage with them critically. It is not one or the other. And take note: just because I assigned something does not mean I agree with it or even that I think it is very good. I assigned it because it expresses important and influential ideas relevant to this course that I think you ought to know about.

Evaluation in the course is based on four components:

1. **Two** critical reading assignments based on prescribed readings (to be determined) worth **20 percent each** for a total of **40 percent** of the course grade (**see below; additional details for these assignments will be posted on the course site in Blackboard**).
2. A total of **eight responses** to assigned readings (you choose the eight weeks in which you will complete these and which three weeks you will not). Additional details below. These are worth **2.5 percent each** for a total of **20 percent of the course grade** and are to be submitted via the course site in Blackboard. **Important: these reading responses are due no later than 14:00 on the Tuesday of each week (i.e., the day before class meetings). Late responses will NOT be accepted under any circumstances.**
3. Two peer reviews of assignments (#1) completed by other students, worth **5 percent each** for a total of **10 percent** of the course grade.
4. A final, **open book** exam worth 30 percent of the course grade.

Critical Reading Assignments (two worth 20 percent each): On two occasions, you will be asked to read a piece that I assign and to respond to some questions about the reading, putting into practice some of the skills we are (hopefully) learning in the course. This will entail, among other things, you identifying what you think is the main argument or point of the article. You will also identify the basic organization of the argument, supporting evidence provided or empirical claims made in relation to the argument, and what key concepts are developed and used to support the argument. More details will be provided in class and via an assignment document posted on the course web site in Blackboard. **The first of these assignments is due by electronic submission via the course space not later than 23:59, Friday, February 23rd. Assignments received after the deadline are late.**

The second of these assignments is due no later than 23:59, on Sunday, April 8th.

Responses to Assigned Readings (eight total worth 2.5 percent each): A core element of this course involves reading the assigned readings and coming to class ready to discuss them. I cannot teach this course in a way that will result in you learning much if you do not do the readings each week and come to class prepared to discuss them and consider them further. Accordingly, and because I do not ask you to do much else, I have high expectations in this area. I am therefore asking you to complete a total of **eight responses to weekly readings. These responses must be no longer than 300 words in length and shall consist of two elements.** The first element involves you stating what you consider to be the main argument of the assigned reading **in your own words** (no direct quotations). The second element involves you providing the quote from the assigned reading that best and most directly conveys this main argument (and provide the page number). Each response is worth 2.5 percent, 1.25 for

the first element and 1.25 for the second. For each of the two elements, reasonable responses will receive full credit and unreasonable responses will receive no credit. **Responses over 300 words will be assigned no credit.**

There are eleven weeks of the course with assigned readings. You can choose which eight weeks will be the ones in which you choose to complete this task. In weeks when there are readings assigned from more than one source (i.e., **not** when there are multiple chapters from the same book), you may choose which reading you respond to. There are no bonuses for doing more than eight responses. If you do more than eight, we will only grade the first eight received. These responses are due by 14:00 on Tuesday, the day before the lecture corresponding to the assigned reading you are responding to. **Because I will post lecture slides each Tuesday evening that will provide some of my own “take” on the assigned readings, responses to weekly assigned readings will not be accepted if they come in after 14:00 on Tuesday of each week. There will be no exceptions to this rule so plan accordingly.**

Peer Reviews (two worth 5 percent each): You will also be asked to exchange papers with two other students in order to complete peer reviews of one another’s writing; I will assign your partners via group assignments in Blackboard. I will also provide additional guidelines and an evaluation form that you must use to complete the peer review. **If you do not use the provided form, you will receive no credit for the peer review. Your completed reviews are to be submitted via the Blackboard site and by email to the paper authors no later than 23:59 on Friday, March 16th.**

Important notes:

- i. **Submit all assignments via the course space in Blackboard.**
- ii. **Do NOT email me any assignments unless online submission fails you.**
- iii. **Do not hand me hard copies of any assignments in lecture or in my office hours or drop them in the main Geography Office or slip them under my door.**
- iv. **Please submit your assignments in .doc format, .rtf format, or .pdf format.**
- v. **Name your files in the following manner: Lastname_Firstname_assignment (e.g., Prudham_Scott_peerreview1).**
- vi. **Note of the Tuesday 14:00 deadline each week for responses to assigned readings and give yourself plenty of time to get those in because once they are late, they do not count.**
- vii. All assignments must be formatted with at least 2.5 cm margins on all sides, and must be double spaced.
- viii. Pages should be numbered.
- ix. Your name should be **on every page of the assignment, as should the course name and code (number)**. I suggest using footers for this.
- x. Extensions will not be granted without properly documented medical reasons as per University policy. I do not make exceptions to this policy in order to ensure fairness to everyone in the class. Being busy is a good excuse, but since everyone has it (including me!), it won’t be accepted under any circumstances. **Material submitted late without extensions arranged prior to the due date are considered late.**

Late Penalties

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day of lateness and weekends count as one day (e.g., if an assignment is due Friday before midnight and it is handed in Sunday before midnight, that is one day late. Handing it in the following Monday before midnight would be two days late). The exception is weekly assigned reading responses

which will not be accepted under any circumstances after 14:00 on Tuesdays prior to the lecture corresponding to the reading.

Pre-Requisites

One of GGR100H1/GGR107H1/ENV221H1/ENV222H1/GGR222H1/GGR223H1 is required as preparation for this course. Students without one of these courses, completed **prior** to JGE331, will **NOT** be permitted to take the course. Some exceptions will be made based on previous course experience on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of the instructor. Students without one of the pre-requisites, or who have doubts about their preparation, should speak to me as soon as possible. I will remove students without adequate preparation and there is a long waiting list, so make sure you have the pre-requisites or talk to me about why you think you should be allowed into the course. Please also note that GGR331 is an exclusion; if you passed that course, you cannot take this one.

On Use of Laptops and Mobile Phones During Class Time

Moderation! Use of electronic devices is now a part of academic life, including in the classroom. I accept and welcome that. But texting, random surfing and/or having one's eyes glued to a computer or telephone screen during class sessions, particularly when others are speaking, is not acceptable or respectable conduct. Please put your phones on vibrate during class meetings and only answer calls or texts that are urgent. If you use a keyboard device to take notes in class, be aware of the sound it makes and the potential for that sound to disturb others. Be advised that there is evidence to suggest that hand-written notes lead to better conceptual understanding of material than typed notes, and that students who have open laptops during classes (i.e., lectures, etc.) tend to score lower overall on tests and exams than students who do not use laptops. Also, you will need to use your cursive writing skills in the exam, so you might want to practise.

Online gaming, video and movie watching, etc., is strictly prohibited during all scheduled course meeting times with the exception of short video clips or other items from social media that you find that are **directly relevant** to the course and that you are prepared to share with everyone else.

Thank you for your consideration in this regard.

Impediments to Academic Performance

If you should encounter a situation that compromises your ability to perform to your potential in this course please notify me immediately. I am committed to your success in this course so please maintain an open line of communication with me.

Video, Audio Recording, and Social Media Postings

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences maintains the following policy as stated in the Academic Handbook for Instructors, section 4.5:

“Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. Students wishing to record lecture or other course material in any way are required to ask the instructor's explicit permission, and may not do so unless permission is granted. This includes tape recording, filming, photographing PowerPoint slides, Blackboard materials, etc. Such

permission is only for that individual student's own study purposes and does not include permission to "publish" them in any way. **It is absolutely forbidden for a student to publish an instructor's notes** to a website or sell them in other form without formal permission".

(<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/faculty-staff/teacher-info/academic-handbook-for-instructors/sections-4-5>)

Thus, you are **not** permitted to make any video or audio recordings of any aspects of in-class meetings on electronic devices, unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g., accessibility needs) and unless you have secured prior and explicit permission from me. This also applies to sharing video or images from class on any social media platform. You are also formally prohibited from sharing lecture slides and other course related materials with anyone other than other students enrolled in this course unless you have my prior permission.

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as.

On Writing (Well)

There are numerous resources at your disposal at the University of Toronto which are intended to help you improve your writing. Some of these are tailored to students whose first language is not English. Some are simply meant for anyone seeking to improve their writing. I urge you to make use of these resources. They include:

"Writing at University", a leaflet you should all have received. If not, consult www.writing.utoronto.ca

See the information sheet on Writing Centres "Writing Centres: How We Work and How to Work with Us" also available at www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres

"Resources at the University of Toronto for Learning English as a Second Language" corresponds to the webpage at www.writing.utoronto.ca/faqs/english-as-second-language. Note also that Communication Café will be held in five weekly sessions for ESL students seeking guidance.

"Writing Plus" is also a helpful resource, available at <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus/>.

"How Not to Plagiarise":
<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/>

"Standard Documentation Formats":
<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/documentation/>

Consult <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/> for more advice on writing.